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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Eleventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 200th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 28 January 1991, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. ILIĆ
(Vice-Chairperson)

later: Ms. TALLAWY
(Chairperson)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

Second periodic report of Sri Lanka (CEDAW/C/13/Add.18)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mrs. Wijetilleke and Mrs. Dissanayake (Sri Lanka) took places at the Committee table.

2. Mrs. WIJETILLEKE (Sri Lanka), replying to the written questions contained in document CEDAW/C/1992/CRP.2, said that Sri Lanka's internal conflict had necessitated an increase in military spending from 2.3 per cent of its budget to 10 per cent. Although that situation had initially hampered the implementation of several ambitious development programmes, over the past three years there had been a complete recovery and Sri Lanka's development programmes were receiving the highest consideration. There had been a significant upsurge in economic growth as a result of increased economic activity and private-sector investment. That had resulted in the international community's granting of concessional assistance for development and economic restructuring with a focus on rural marginalized subgroups. Such assistance would undoubtedly benefit Sri Lankan women.

3. Even in the worst years of the conflict there had been no discrimination against women, and problems confronting Sri Lankans had been dealt with irrespective of gender considerations. Issues relating to displaced persons and refugees and their resettlement and rehabilitation were being accorded highest priority by the Government, which for that purpose had established the Ministry of Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Social Welfare. That Ministry, which was headed by a Cabinet Minister, received assistance from a State Ministry headed by a State Minister and from the Rehabilitation of Persons, Properties and Industries Authority (REPIA). There were no statistics on the number of women and children who had been affected by Sri Lanka's internal conflict. At the height of that conflict, there had been as many as 1.2 million displaced persons. That number had now been reduced to approximately 696,000 people, or 163,500 families.

4. The Ministries and REPIA were implementing several schemes for the resettlement and rehabilitation of displaced persons. Approximately 529 welfare centres had been established to house displaced persons. The centres were situated mainly in the north, the east and border districts, as well as in Colombo. The financial assistance given to displaced persons ranged from the payment of a settling-in allowance, a Productivity Enterprise Grant and a housing grant, to the provision of soft loans to higher-income groups. Dry rations were also given to families. Several non-governmental organizations, national and international, were assisting the Government in its endeavours. All the schemes currently being implemented focused on the family unit, and assistance was given to the family breadwinner, irrespective of whether that

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person was a man or a woman. Given the resources available and the seriousness of the problem, no differential treatment was meted out on the basis of gender.

5. There were no women under military detention. Women arrested in connection with the insurrection had been placed in remand prisons established under the Prisons Ordinance and under civil administration. The allegations against those persons were being investigated in terms of the statutory law applicable to all persons. They would be tried by established judicial tribunals in the same manner as men.

6. Approximately 200,000 people had fled to southern India as refugees. Of that number, 30,000 had indicated their willingness to return to Sri Lanka, and the process of repatriating them had begun on 22 January 1992. The number of women in that group was not known, since the issues involved were dealt with irrespective of whether the refugee was a man or a woman.

7. Women victims of political violence had the same opportunities as men to seek redress for their grievances and obtain compensation. There were schemes that provided for compensation for loss or destruction of private or public property and injury or death to public servants. Where a grievance was justiciable, redress could be sought before the courts of law irrespective of whether the aggrieved party was a man or a woman.

8. At the top of the hierarchical structure of the national machinery established to deal with women's issues was the Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs. The Ministry was headed by a Cabinet Minister, who was a woman. The State Ministry of Women's Affairs was headed by a State Minister (also a woman) and operated within the infrastructure of the Cabinet Ministry. The State Ministry had been assigned specific responsibilities with respect to women's issues. The Women's Bureau was the implementing organ for specific projects.

9. In order to meet their routine recurrent expenditures, the State Ministry and the Women's Bureau received independent budgetary allocations from the Consolidated Fund of the State. Development programmes were funded by foreign aid, and the amount of assistance for any given year depended on the requirements of projects.

10. There was no special relationship between the Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs and the Commission for the Elimination of Discrimination.

11. The Government machinery was periodically reviewed and, when necessary, reorganized with a view to placing emphasis on specific priorities. The objectives and functions of the Women's Bureau were also determined from time to time within that framework. However, the overall broad objective of the Bureau was the improvement of the status of women. In the past few years, the Bureau had concentrated on projects that promoted economic activity among women in rural areas and also among other selected target groups.

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12. The objective of "ensuring the preservation of Sri Lankan culture and traditions by fostering moral and ethical values so far as they affect the role of women in the process of modernization" related to the need to preserve among Sri Lankan women the age-old culture and traditions of the peoples of Sri Lanka even though the traditional role of women might change as a result of their advancement and quest for equality. That did not mean that women must not assume vocations or professions that were not traditionally identified with women. However, it did mean that the positive features of moral and ethical standards must not be abandoned.

13. No recommendations concerning the equality of women and men before the law had been put forward. The Women's Bureau was preoccupied with its priority projects and had not dealt with the area of legislative reforms.

14. Thirty-nine complaints of sex discrimination had been filed with the Commission for the Elimination of Discrimination. Of those, 22 had been filed by women and 17 had been filed by men. In 11 of the 22 cases, it had been found that there had been no discrimination. In six instances, the complaints had been either settled or withdrawn, and five cases were still pending. Most of the complaints related to promotions or benefits of public-sector and corporate employees and alleged discrimination on more grounds than sex.

15. The Commission for the Elimination of Discrimination offered a conciliatory and mediatory process free of the procedural technicalities inherent in those followed by a court of law. Parties did not need to be represented by lawyers before the Commission. By contrast, applications before the Supreme Court had to be argued by counsel, which could be a costly exercise. That perhaps accounted for the absence of applications to the Supreme Court and the filing of some applications with the Commission. Another reason might be the inability to prove discrimination in a court of law. In most of the applications filed with the Commission, the allegation of discrimination on the ground of sex appeared to have been merely appended; whether the allegation of sex discrimination was made with all seriousness was another matter.

16. The Supreme Court was the highest court in Sri Lanka. It had exclusive jurisdiction to hear, try and determine allegations of infringement of fundamental rights. The Commission for the Elimination of Discrimination had been established by regulation and was empowered to attempt settlement through conciliation of any matter that might be referred to it by the Supreme Court.

17. Applications to the Supreme Court could be filed by the aggrieved party only. An amendment to enable other interested parties to file on behalf of the aggrieved party was currently being considered. Complaints to the Commission could be made by women's organizations.

18. The Government had not yet made use of temporary special measures to overcome obstacles to women's equality, and no plans had been formulated for that purpose.

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19. The draft Charter for Women was currently awaiting Government approval. The State Ministry of Women's Affairs would decide on the mechanism for monitoring implementation of the Convention. That might include the appointment of a National Commission on Women. The views expressed in the Committee would be of great assistance to Sri Lanka in that endeavour.

20. Sri Lankans were aware of the legal principles, applicable in terms of statutory provisions in personal laws, that treated women differently from men. Whether that differentiation in treatment discriminated against women in every instance was another matter. An attempt to introduce a unified personal law applicable to all persons had not met with popular approval. In the case of Muslim personal law, legal principles were derived from the Koran. There was, of course, no way of casting aside religious beliefs for the achievement of uniformity. A Muslim Law Reform Committee (which included women) had been appointed by the State Minister for Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs to examine the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act and recommend reform where necessary.

21. According to the Shafi school of thought that was applicable to the majority of Sri Lankan Muslims, men inherited larger portions of an inheritance than women because husbands were considered to have a duty to support their wives. There was no reciprocal duty on the part of women to support their husbands. Further, when a Muslim man contracted marriage, he was required to give mehr (a form of dowry) to the wife. The wife had the right to call for the mehr at any time during the marriage and, if it was still unpaid at the time of the husband's death, to recover it from his estate. In other communities in Sri Lanka, the dowry was always given by the wife's family to the husband.

22. A Sri Lankan man had no obligation to maintain an illegitimate child. That was an area of clear discrimination, and she hoped that the Reform Committee would consider a change in attitude.

23. Under Muslim law as applicable in Sri Lanka, the woman's consent was a prerequisite for a valid marriage. However, that requirement was rarely met. Consideration was currently being given to introducing a provision that would require brides to sign their marriage contracts. Clearly, that was an area not of discrimination but of the violation of existing equal rights, and the Reform Committee might come up with a firm proposal to ensure compliance with the right to consent.

24. In Sri Lanka, polygamy was rarely practised by Muslim men. Under Muslim law, the right to practice polygamy carried with it serious reciprocal duties and conditions. The Muslim Law Reform Committee was currently considering a proposal to require the signing of a prenuptial contract that would contain a clause giving the wife authority to divorce her husband by unilateral decision if he contracted a second marriage.

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25. The criterion for retaining personal status law as the only area in which religious and ethnic laws remained intact was the degree of interaction among the various communities in Sri Lanka. Moreover, it had been an established principle for Sri Lanka's former colonial masters that the customary law prevalent in the country should be allowed to prevail as far as possible.

26. While Muslims had recourse to the Quazi courts for the redress of grievances, Sri Lankans governed by other personal laws had equal access to the ordinary courts for the redress of grievances regarding personal law matters. The Quazi courts had jurisdiction over Muslim marriage and divorce matters.

27. There had been no serious agitation by women for the reform of personal laws. Rather, the focus had been on improving women's economic conditions and skills. Given the situation of Sri Lankan women, it was necessary to strengthen certain welfare measures in selected areas, such as women in the economy. At the current stage, the use of temporary special measures to end the application of personal laws was not necessary.

28. Regrettably, the Women's Bureau survey on the changing attitudes and perspectives of women had not yet been completed.

29. Statistics showed that the average age of marriage of Sri Lankan women was currently 26 years. Opportunities for secondary, and even university, education had prompted an increasing number of women to pursue careers and employment before getting married. While the existence of a low minimum age of marriage in the statutes appeared to be irrelevant, there was a need to incorporate into the statutes an age that realistically reflected the current state of affairs. The revision of school textbooks and teaching materials to eliminate gender stereotypes had begun. By means of life skills projects, students in elementary schools were exposed to the same skills without any gender differentiation. In secondary schools, young men and women studied maths and science for the same number of hours.

30. Development efforts were being undertaken to provide more vocational alternatives for women. By means of a very gradual process, diversification of vocational skills was being introduced by both governmental and non-governmental agencies.

31. The Sri Lankan Government had not been able to provide facilities to alleviate the family duties of working women.

32. The fact that a woman was governed by Muslim law (the Thesawalamai or the Kandyan Law) had had no impact on the use of violence.

33. Most women workers were employed on a year-round basis on tea plantations. Surveys indicated that plantation managers complied with the equal wage laws. Women working on plantations had the right to maternity benefits.

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34. There were a number of programmes for female plantation workers in such areas as adult education, health, nutrition, sanitation, family planning and fuel-saving techniques. The infant and maternal mortality rate had dropped considerably and literacy levels had increased, as had the physical quality of life in general.

35. A few surveys on women in free trade zones had been initiated, and it was believed that there was room for improvement in such women's working and living conditions.

36. Approximately 250,000 Sri Lankan women were employed in the Middle and Far East. Embassies in Abu Dhabi, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait and Cairo and Hony, as well as consulates in Jordan and Lebanon, looked after Sri Lankan women's interests. There were also labour attachés in some of those places who dealt with the welfare of Sri Lankan women workers. Certain mandatory conditions were being imposed on employers in the best interests of employees in order to ensure a minimum wage and the provision of return fares.

37. After the outbreak of the Gulf War, approximately 65,000 Sri Lankan women had returned to Sri Lanka. When cases of rape, mutilation and death of Sri Lankan women in those countries had been brought to the attention of the Government, appropriate action had been taken and would continue to be taken. Of the 65,000 women who had returned to Sri Lanka, over 30,000 had subsequently returned to their employment abroad. Ten per cent of those who had returned to Sri Lanka had decided to remain there and pursue self-employment. Employment projects were being developed to assist such persons. Each returnee was to be paid a minimum amount in Sri Lanka rupees, equivalent to US$2,500, as compensation.

38. Domestic workers were not governed by labour laws, nor had there been any attempt to standardize their wages or working hours. In that respect, there was no differentiation in the treatment of men and women. While there was no system of redress, domestic workers were free to leave their employment at any time. As a result of the exodus to the Middle East, domestic labour in Sri Lanka had become scarce.

39. Regrettably, she had not been able to obtain statistics on women prostitutes. While existing legislation was adequate to combat the problem, greater emphasis must be placed on effective enforcement.

40. Forty-nine Sri Lankans had contracted acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS); of those, 39 were men and 10 were women. Effective information campaigns were being carried out to educate and warn the public about AIDS.

41. A study on structural adjustment policies had been carried out by the Centre for Women's Research, a non-governmental organization. The Women's Bureau would consider undertaking a study of sex tourism. Sri Lanka was not faced with the problem of the export of female labour to home-based or

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entertainment-related overseas work. The Women's Bureau intended to conduct a study of free trade zones.

42. Ms. BERNARD asked for information concerning cases of violence against women arising out of the recent armed conflict. She also wanted to know what efforts had been made to assist the victims of such violence, in the form of counselling or redress.

43. Ms. SCHOPP-SCHILLING welcomed the proposed establishment of a National Commission on Women and felt that it should consider the possibility of using the temporary special measures provided for by article 4 of the Convention. With regard to women working in free trade zones, she wanted to know what exactly the Government's concerns were, under what conditions the women were working and whether they were able to join trade unions. She noted that, under the traditional division of labour, rural women in drier zones had played an important role in production and had been able to earn an income by selling their produce. She wondered whether, with the change in traditional structures and the break-up of village life, the women concerned were losing that income. What action was the Government taking to identify other income-generating activities for such women? She pointed out that the statistics contained in a recent report on missing persons in Sri Lanka showed that men and women of all ages were affected. What action was the Government taking on the problem, since many of the women who had disappeared had been heads of household and had left children behind?

44. Ms. OESER felt that the representative of Sri Lanka had not fully answered the question of why temporary special measures had not been taken under article 4 of the Convention. In the Committee's experience, article 4 was one of the most important instruments offered by the Convention and it could be useful in many areas in Sri Lanka in overcoming de facto inequality.

45. Ms. FORDE asked whether young women accepted the application of personal law and whether they were free to opt for the application of national law instead. She felt that the reply to the questions concerning violence had been rather brief and wanted to know whether domestic violence was a problem in Sri Lanka, since that question had not been properly addressed. She also wondered what provision was made for women after the breakdown of marriage and what happened after divorce. She too welcomed the proposed establishment of a National Commission on Women.

46. Ms. EVATT asked what provision for divorce existed under the general law and whether there were plans to reform the grounds for divorce which were rather outdated. In connection with domestic violence, she asked whether special mechanisms existed to protect women, such as restraining orders against husbands or partners. She also requested more information on the extent of domestic violence in Sri Lanka.

(Ms. Evatt)

47. She wished to know whether the new measures on prostitution would remove the stigma of illegality and whether there were any plans for rehabilitation programmes. Also, were there any plans to reform the law on rape, which dated from the last century and was it still necessary to prove physical resistance in rape cases? She explained that the questions concerning socialization to traditional gender roles, which the representative of Sri Lanka had not fully understood, referred to special affirmative action programmes designed to give women greater access to positions of responsibility.

48. Ms. QUINTOS-DELES said that it was clear from its first two reports that the Sri Lankan Government was committed to improving the status of women and that de jure equality was now in place. However, she felt that the next report should look at areas where covert discrimination might exist. In particular, it should look at the problem of assistance for displaced persons, given that it was frequently harder for women to resettle because of their family and community responsibilities. In addition, the procedure for seeking redress for gender discrimination through application to the Commission for the Elimination of Discrimination or the Supreme Court needed to be reviewed. Why had certain cases been withdrawn? Perhaps women needed further assistance in order to use the system successfully.

49. It was difficult to believe that no discrimination existed in a society where no adequate family and child-care support structures were available. Women were always at a disadvantage under such circumstances. Finally, was the situation of women in the economy the same as that of men, or did women experience more economic difficulties? If so, were they a result of discriminatory conditions?

50. Ms. CORTI noted that the payment of a dowry was not a legal obligation. However, arranged marriages continued to exist and in such cases dowries had to be provided. She recognized that the custom was widespread and traditional, but wondered nevertheless whether there were any plans to eliminate it by invoking the provisions of the Convention. She noted that the obligation on men to provide maintenance after divorce was now to be extended to women, but how could a woman without property or employment be expected to meet such an obligation? She also wanted to know whether there were any plans to raise the minimum age of marriage for girls. At present the legal age was 14, which she considered to be very low. She asked whether measures were planned to curb the emigration of female workers, who were frequently employed under poor and even dangerous conditions which placed a great strain on them and sometimes led them into prostitution.

51. Ms. UKEJE noted that the Supreme Court had jurisdiction over cases concerning discrimination. She wondered whether that situation was not a case of deliberate discrimination, since most women could not afford the high costs involved in bringing cases to court. She also noted that many life skills courses were still discriminatory and asked whether there were any plans to remedy that situation.

52. Mrs. WIJETILLEKE (Sri Lanka), replying to the question concerning women victims of the armed conflict, said that no direct rehabilitation measures were being taken but that efforts were being made to assess the problems of those concerned and meet their needs.

53. On the question of female workers in free trade zones, she pointed out that legal provisions did exist enabling them to join trade unions and that wage boards had been established. However, legal provisions were frequently disregarded in practice and the Government was looking into the problem.

54. With regard to the problems of rural women, she pointed out that poverty alleviation programmes were being introduced to assist the women concerned, who would be trained and encouraged to switch to newer and easier occupations that were no less profitable.

55. The problem of missing persons mainly concerned men and she was therefore unable to provide detailed information on that matter, which she hoped would be covered in the next report.

56. In reply to the question concerning temporary special measures and affirmative action, she felt that such measures were seen as placing women at an unfair advantage and would lead to unnecessary antagonism. Progress was already being made by women in all areas and such measures were not really required.

57. Mrs. DISSANAYAKE (Sri Lanka) pointed out that affirmative action was being taken in some areas. For example, there were plans to open a special vocational training centre for women, with assistance from the German Government, aimed at popularizing non-traditional vocations.

58. Mrs. WIJETILLEKE (Sri Lanka), replying to the questions concerning personal laws, said that there was no agitation for reform among the Muslim community, which seemed to suggest that women were not dissatisfied with their situation. It was not possible to opt out of such laws, but in many cases the women concerned were actually better off, since they were entitled to just treatment under the law.

59. In reply to questions concerning violence, she said there was no indication that violence was more prevalent against women subject to personal laws. With regard to domestic violence, consideration was being given to legal provisions aimed at strengthening the protection of women.

60. With regard to the different legal systems and their application to divorce, she said that in Sri Lanka a woman did not have the right to opt out of personal law unless, for legal reasons, it was declared inapplicable in her particular case. She said that it was possible for non-Muslims to convert to Islam in order to take a second wife under the polygamous marriage law applicable to Muslims. That was a ruse sometimes employed by Sri Lankan men, but their obligations to their first wives remained unaffected. The grounds

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for divorce were based on the concept of fault, covering adultery, malicious desertion and incurable impotence. Kandyan law included the ground of mutual consent and there were also provisions specific to the Muslim faith. A study of the grounds for divorce was currently under way, aimed at establishing the concept of irretrievable breakdown of the marriage as the unified basis for divorce, which would then be evidenced by other grounds and by a five-year separation. The review was also concerned with post-divorce measures, such as access to the family home and division of property, including dowry property. Under current legislation, injunctions could be granted to prevent access, where domestic violence had been attested.

61. Sri Lanka was a very conservative country and prostitution carried a considerable stigma. It continued to be practised, however, as it provided a relatively easy source of income. It was the duty of the law enforcement services to make efforts to control and eliminate prostitution.

62. On the question concerning rape, she said that it was necessary only to establish the absence of consent and that while physical resistance could be adduced as evidence of non-consent, it was not in itself a necessary condition.

63. There was now considerably greater acceptance of women in positions of authority in the Government and in the private sector in Sri Lanka. There was a new tendency in the country to make appointments on merit, as evidenced by the latest promotions in the civil service and by the growing proportion of women in the judiciary. She said that the issues of displaced persons, redress procedures, family and child-care support structures and the economic difficulties experienced by women would be addressed in the next periodic report and assured the Committee that, while covert discrimination continued to exist, the position of women was considerably improved as there was no longer any reluctance to promote them. Their problems were due rather to economic factors.

64. Turning to the questions concerning marriage, she conceded that there were no legal provisions to prevent the payment of dowries but pointed out that the practice would not, anyway, be eliminated by legislation. The problem would continue to receive consideration. There was no requirement for a woman to provide support for her family if she had no means to do so. Studies had shown that the average age of marriage in Sri Lanka was 26 and she agreed that there was, accordingly, a need to amend the statutes of the various legal systems on the minimum age for marriage. Concerning the exodus of Sri Lankans in search of work, she pointed out that measures to curtail it would constitute a denial of rights and would therefore be opposed. As the exodus was caused by economic necessity, it would be more appropriate to take measures to rectify the economic conditions that forced people to migrate in search of work.

65. The Supreme Court had jurisdiction to attend to matters referred to it concerning the full ambit of violations of fundamental rights and it would

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therefore be discriminatory for violations of women's rights to be removed from that process. Issues of discrimination could also be referred to the Commission for the Elimination of Discrimination, a more informal forum with no adversarial proceedings which aimed instead to effect reconciliation between the parties.

66. Ms. ABAKA pointed out that, while men might have been the primary victims of the conflict in Sri Lanka, women had also suffered from its consequences and were therefore in need of economic rehabilitation.

67. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Committee deeply appreciated the efforts already made in Sri Lanka, in view of the severe problems experienced by that country, but felt that certain additional measures could be taken and that the country's Government and people should explore specific measures for the implementation of the Convention and for the advancement of women. Those measures should not be confined to the legal field, but should include educational programmes and the raising of awareness, and they should have one common aim: to bring the position of Sri Lankan women, de facto as well as de jure, into line with the provisions of the Convention. While programmes could be adjusted to specific cultural as well as religious circumstances, efforts must be made to change people's prevailing attitudes without causing counterproductive results.

68. Mrs. Wijetilleke and Mrs. Dissanayake (Sri Lanka) withdrew.

The meeting was suspended at 4.55 p.m. and resumed at 5.15 p.m.

69. Ms. Tallawy took the Chair.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (continued)

Draft report of Working Group I (CEDAW/C/WG.I/1992/WP.3)

70. Ms. BERNARD (Coordinator of Working Group I) said that Working Group I had held three meetings and that its report, contained in document CEDAW/C/WG.I/1992/WP.3, was before the Committee. She proceeded to introduce the report, referring to each item in succession and drawing attention to certain amendments.

71. In paragraph 10, it was uncertain whether the third periodic report of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics would be considered, in view of the dissolution of the USSR. With reference to paragraph 11, she said that the second periodic report of Bangladesh had been added because the initial and second periodic reports of Yemen would be considered as one report. In paragraph 12, she noted an error in the list of countries whose second periodic reports would be considered. The list should be France, United Kingdom and Senegal as a reserve. In paragraph 13, the list of countries whose second periodic reports would be considered should read: "Senegal and three others, with one other as a reserve", and not as printed in the report.

(Ms. Bernard)

72. The heading of section 4 should be amended to read: "The Working Group considered and accepted, with modification, proposals for the Committee's contribution to the Human Rights Conference in 1993, and recommended the following:", and the word "in" in the fourth line of paragraph (d) of that section should be deleted.

73. The CHAIRPERSON suggested that the Committee consider the report of Working Group I paragraph by paragraph. Paragraph 1 identified the members of the Working Group and paragraph 2 provided information on the number of its meetings and the agenda. Paragraphs 3 and 4 dealt with the pre-session working group. The regional groups had to nominate experts who would constitute the pre-session working group for 1933. The Group of Eastern European States had nominated Ms. Nikolaeva and Ms. Ilić. The Group of Asian States had nominated Ms. Akamatsu and Ms. Shangzhen. The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States had nominated Ms. Forde and Ms. Bravo Nuñez de Ramsey. The Group of Western European and Other States had nominated Ms. Schöpp-Schilling, Ms. Bustelo García del Real and Ms. Corti. Since some members of the Committee would be subject to re-election in February 1992, priority should be given to persons who would definitely be members of the Committee in 1993.

74. Ms. SCHOPP-SCHILLING said that, since she was subject to re-election in February, she proposed that Ms. Corti and Ms. Bustelo Garcia del Real should be nominated for the pre-session working group on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States.

75. Ms. UKEJE said that although the Group of African States had not held consultations, she wished to nominate Ms. Abaka and Ms. Walla-Tchangai to serve on the pre-session working group.

76. The CHAIRPERSON said there seemed to be general agreement that the pre-session working group should focus its attention more on analytical questions, since the Committee was dealing with an increasing number of second and third periodic reports. It had been suggested that, at the beginning of each session, an hour should be set aside for a brief report by the chairperson of the pre-session working group on the reports to be considered.

77. Ms. FORDE said that in the past, the pre-session working group had provided the Committee with questions to be asked and detailed information and comments. Accordingly, she did not feel it necessary to set aside any additional time for further discussion in that regard.

78. Ms. BERNARD said that she supported the view expressed by Ms. Forde.

79. Ms. UKEJE said that the material provided by the pre-session working group was sufficient. There did not seem to be any need to set aside an hour for further discussion.

80. Ms. AOUIJ said that it would be very useful to hear a brief summary of the views of the pre-session working group concerning obstacles encountered and progress made by States in implementing the Convention.

81. Ms. BUSTELO GARCIA del REAL suggested that at the Committee's next session, the pre-session working group might provide a quick summary, on a trial basis, of the general issues to be considered in dealing with reports by States parties.

82. Ms. SCHOPP-SCHILLING said that the Committee should postpone a decision on the matter until its next session, when it would see how the proposed procedure worked in practice. Although time constraints should be kept in mind, it would be helpful to have a general discussion of emerging trends. In another connection, she felt that the concluding comments made by the Chairperson after the consideration of a report should be adopted by the Committee, so that they could be presented as the views of the Committee in its report.

83. Ms. BERNARD said that there was no need to impose an obligation on the Chairperson to make concluding remarks after the consideration of reports. That should be left to the discretion of the Chairperson at the time.

84. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Committee would refrain until 1993 from taking a final decision on setting aside an hour for a brief review by the pre-session Working Group of the reports to be considered. As to the comments made by the Chairperson, it was established practice that such comments appeared in the Committee's report as observations by the Committee itself.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.